

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
on the Governors' Proposed Biennial Budget**

March 6, 2015

Katie Rowan, Newtown, CT

Hi. My name is Katie Rowan. I am 10 years old, and I live in Newtown, CT.

Please don't cut the funding to the DDS Voluntary Services Program. It helps my big sister Amanda and my whole family.

Amanda LOVES her helpers. She calls them her friends. Sometimes when she misses them she looks out the door and yells "Where are you?!" When they are here she loves to play with them. They play on Amanda's iPad and talk about her favorite musicals. They also work on reading too. They also do counting and writing. Amanda loves her helpers.

This program doesn't just help my sister Amanda. It also helps my family. Before we had the help, we couldn't do any of the things we wanted to as a family. My mom could never come to any of my soccer games or school events. Also, my family loves to hike and snowshoe, but Amanda is not able to do those things. These things are too hard for Amanda because she is also physically disabled. She can get tired, or off balance. When Amanda's helpers are here, we can get to do some things we don't normally do. Amanda's helpers also do physical things with Amanda. Sometimes they go on the treadmill or do jumping jacks with her or have a dance party. We love Amanda's helpers for helping us with this.

We also need Amanda's helpers here because of safety issues. Amanda sometimes for no reason at all, goes after my little sister and tries to hurt her. This is not good, but when Amanda's helpers are here they help her with her behavior. They tell her that you can't hit or scream and yell, they teach her that she should use a calm voice and use her words. They also help with this because when they are there Amanda has so much fun with them that she doesn't even think about hurting anyone. They help Amanda play with us and we can have more fun with her. Because of Amanda's helpers my little sister is safe, and my older sister is getting better at showing her feelings without attacking anyone.

Please don't cut this program. I love my sister Amanda and always want her to be able to live with us. This program helps my family so much and Amanda is so much better at all of the things I talked about then before they came.